

MINUTES OF THE
MISSISSIPPI CHARTER SCHOOL AUTHORIZER BOARD
Regular Monthly Meeting
Friday, December 5, 2014

The regular monthly meeting of the Mississippi Charter School Authorizer Board was held at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, December 5, 2014, at the office of the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, located at 3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, Mississippi. In attendance were:

Tommie Cardin, Chairman
Krystal Cormack, Vice-Chair
Dr. Bonita Coleman-Potter
Chris Wilson
Johnny Franklin
Dr. Carey Wright

Dr. Karen Elam participated by teleconference.
Also present was Executive Director Marian Schutte.
Board Chairman Tommie Cardin called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

ITEM I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

A. Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was previously circulated to all Board members and subsequently amended adding an Executive Director's Report, as well as Items C through G under New Business.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to adopt the agenda, as amended.

MOTION: Mr. Wilson

SECOND: Mrs. Cormack

There being no discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

ITEM II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of the October 14, 2014 meeting were previously distributed to the Board members for review.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion for approval of the Minutes of the October 14, 2014 meeting.

MOTION: Dr. Wright

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

There being no discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

ITEM III. CHAIR REPORT

Chairman Cardin stated that he was pleased to report the hiring of Executive Director Marian Schutte, who officially began work on November 3, 2014. In light of her hiring, Chairman Cardin stated that he would like to focus in the coming year on shifting the emphasis of the Board from an operational standpoint and better define its true role as a policy making Board, turning the implementation and execution of day to day activities over to the Executive Director. He stated further that he will examine the committee structure currently in place and make recommendations for revisions as needed. He also intends to examine the Bylaws for any needed revisions. Chairman Cardin stated that he would like to see the meetings held in other geographical locations of the state and that that will be addressed as the upcoming year's meeting schedule is drafted.

ITEM IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Schutte stated that she has received a warm welcome since coming on board and moving to Mississippi, which she greatly appreciates. She is excited to see what the future holds and has already started on the tremendous amount of work ahead of her. She thanked Chairman Cardin and Kathryn Stewart for their assistance in getting her settled and for providing her interim office space. She reported that she spent the last month meeting with stake holders in the charter school process and in taking over the day to day operations that Chairman Cardin mentioned earlier. Since coming on board, she has had the opportunity to participate in the RFP process sitting in on the capacity interviews, as well as attending the public forums and hearing from members of the communities who will be potentially affected by these schools.

As a financial update, Ms. Schutte reported that Cornerstone Consulting is still in the process setting up the security for the Board's funds and is able to pay travel reimbursements and payroll at this time. More invoices are on the agenda for approval later today.

As for charter accountability and monitoring, Ms. Schutte thanked Dr. Coleman-Potter on the feedback provided on the contract being drafted for Reimagine Prep. She stated that she will be working with a NACSA team to further review that contract, as well as their performance framework, and she has met with Dr. Wright and some of her staff at MDE to review the pre-opening process for Reimagine Prep.

Ms. Schutte proposed that the Board hold a retreat the day before the January meeting at which time she would present ideas, plans and timelines for 2015 related to the application process, oversight and monitoring of Reimagine and any future school, Board protocols, and committee structure, among other things. She feels this will allow the Board to set a vision and take action on items at the following day's Board meeting.

ITEM V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Operator Liaison Committee

Dr. Elam reported that since the last Board meeting she traveled to Memphis to meet with Achievement School District's Director of New Schools, Margo Roen. Based on Ms. Roen's experience in attracting national quality CMOs to Tennessee, she suggested the following items our Board should consider in doing the same: 1) National CMOs will be looking to see what type of talent pipeline they will have to draw on for teachers in the areas and she suggested that the Board communicate with the state university's schools of education and ensure that the student teachers are aware of what the charter schools offer; 2) Set a high bar for authorizing charters; 3) Develop a streamline application process for experienced CMOs; 4) Review the teacher certification regulations and the various avenues through which teachers can become certified to see if more options can be provided; 5) consider allowing a governance board to preside over more than one school; and 6) develop collaboration with non-profit and philanthropic organizations to possibly provide facilities for charter schools. After meeting with the committee members and with Marian Schutte it was decided that the Board should develop a "pitch book" with an outline of how the Board should conduct its initial confrontation with any potential CMO.

B. RFP Committee

Krystal Cormack reported that the Committee has been working on the overall RFP process for the upcoming cycle. In addition, they hosted the November 12th Board interviews with two teams present to discuss their proposals. Participants in these interviews included Marian Schutte, Beth Seling, the RFP Committee members, and the independent evaluation team consisting of two out-of-state evaluators and two in-state evaluators. In addition to the Board interviews, two public forums were conducted in Jackson and in Columbus. Each Board member who was unable to attend was provided with a transcript of those events. Beth Seling summarized the multistep evaluation process that has taken place to date and stated that the Board will today vote on the evaluators' recommendation reports that resulted from this process.

ITEM VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Executive Director Moving Reimbursement

Included in the Board's offer of employment to Marian Schutte was the reimbursement of reasonable moving expenses not to exceed a sum of \$10,000. She has submitted an itemization of the expenses she incurred and that has been provided to the Board, as well as to Cornerstone Consulting and the state Auditor's Office. All of these are out-of-pocket expenses that she will not recoup through any form of refund. Some are taxable to her and those amounts will need to be withheld. A copy of that itemization is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve payment of the moving expenses submitted by Marian Schutte.

MOTION: Dr. Coleman-Potter

SECOND: Dr. Wright

There being no discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

B. Approval of Invoices

Marian Schutte summarized the items being presented for payment. A copy of the itemization is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve payment of the invoices presented.

MOTION: Mrs. Cormack

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

There being no discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

Dr. Coleman-Potter asked if the Board should consider amending the budget for the Cornerstone expenses based on the invoices approved today and the likelihood of being over-budget for the year. Chairman Cardin stated that an amendment of the Cornerstone contract will be considered today and he will suggest an amendment to the budget at that time.

C. National Association of Charter School Authorizers Membership

Marian Schutte reported that the Board was a member of NACSA in the first year of existence and is seeking to renew that membership for the remainder of the fiscal year (through June 2015) at a discounted rate of \$250.00.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to renew the NACSA membership at the stated price.

MOTION: Mr. Franklin

SECOND: Mr. Wilson

There being no discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

D. Amended Memorandum of Understanding with IHL and Internal Control Policy

Marian Schutte presented an amendment of the MOU previously approved by the Board. This amendment is a technical correction of the Board fund account numbers identified in the MOU.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the First Amended Memorandum of Understanding with IHL.

MOTION: Mrs. Cormack

SECOND: Dr. Elam

There being no discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

E. Cornerstone Consulting Group Contract

Marian Schutte presented an amended contract with Cornerstone Consulting Group for consideration, a copy of which had been provided to the Board members. Dr. Coleman-Potter requested justification of the increased contract amount from a not-to-exceed pay out of \$5,000 for the previous contract to \$10,000 in the amendment being considered. Ms. Schutte explained that the amendment is a 6 month extension of the first 6 month contract, and the not-to-exceed amount for each 6 month period is \$5,000 for a total of \$10,000 for the full 12 month period. Dr. Coleman-Potter and Dr. Wright requested that the dates in the amendment be corrected to more clearly state that intent.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve the proposed amendment of the Cornerstone Consulting Group contract, as amended.

MOTION: Mr. Franklin

SECOND: Dr. Wright

Chairman Cardin stated for clarification that the proposed amendment will reflect that this is an extension of the original contract. The total contract will not exceed \$10,000 and the extension will not exceed \$5,000.

There being no further discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to amend the budget line item to accommodate payment of the Cornerstone contract extension.

MOTION: Dr. Wright

SECOND: Dr. Coleman-Potter

Dr. Coleman-Potter requested clarification on where the additional \$5,000 will be taken from within the budget. Chairman Cardin stated that funds can be moved from the "other fees" line item of \$74,000 and placed into the Cornerstone line item.

There being no further discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

F. Mississippi State Agency Workers' Compensation Insurance Membership

Chairman Cardin requested that the Board considered participating in the State of Mississippi's self-insured trust for workers' compensation insurance for the Marian Schutte inasmuch as she will be traveling as part of the execution of her duties as executive director.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to approve participation in the Mississippi State Agency Workers' Compensation Insurance coverage at an annual premium not to exceed \$600.

MOTION: Mrs. Cormack

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

There being no discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

G. State Purchase Card

Marian Schutte stated that the Board has delegated financial duties to Cornerstone, and one recommendation from Cornerstone is that the Board obtain a state purchase card for the executive director's use with limited types of day to day expenses for which she has budgetary authority and that a monthly limit on the card be set at \$1000.

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to participate in the State Purchase Card for use by the Executive Director with a limit of \$1000 per month.

MOTION: Mr. Franklin

SECOND: Dr. Coleman-Potter

There being no discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

H. Application of Inspire Charter Schools (Inspire Charter School)

Mrs. Cormack presented the recommendation report of the committee, a copy of which is attached as Exhibit C.

Mrs. Cormack made a motion to deny Inspire Charter Schools charter application because the charter application does not meet the criteria for approval for the reasons articulated in the Recommendation Report presented to the board.

MOTION: Mrs. Cormack

SECOND: Mr. Franklin

There being no discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

I. Application of Midtown Partners, Inc. (Midtown Public Charter School)

Mrs. Cormack presented the recommendation report of the committee, a copy of which is attached as Exhibit D.

Mrs. Cormack made a motion to approve Midtown Partners, Inc. charter school application for the 2015-2016 school year, provided that execution of the charter contract and final approval of the school to open shall be conditioned on timely satisfaction of a set of reasonable preopening requirements. These preopening requirements will be designed to ensure that the school is prepared to meet its obligations as a public charter school, including but not limited to all building, health, safety, insurance and other legal requirements that must be fulfilled prior to opening.

MOTION: Mrs. Cormack

SECOND: Dr. Wright

There being no discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

Mrs. Cormack thanked members of both of these applicants for their hard work and dedication and continued commitment to Mississippi children.

Mr. Wilson stated that he personally appreciates and commends the RFP committee members and the evaluators for all of their hard work. He stated that it is clear to him, as he looks at the application that was denied, that there is a significant desire and significant heart in wanting to do great things in Columbus, Mississippi, for this purpose. He asked where this denial leads them and what is the Board's responsibility, if there is one, to help them get going in the right direction?

Chairman Cardin stated that the Board will offer the same approach as in the last application cycle and will be willing to meet with Inspire to go over the deficiencies in their application so that they fully understand what those deficiencies are to help them possibly make the needed corrections and come back again.

Mr. Franklin stated that it is gratifying to see the desire on behalf of multiple communities to offer an option for parents in providing a quality education for their children. He asked that the Board do whatever is within its legal authority to support these groups while the community interest is where it is, and possibly look into seeking financial support from the outside to help the Board provide technical assistance to these groups. He commended those individuals in the communities who are willing to step forward and insist on a better option for their children and wants to see that interest nurtured and encouraged and to see them succeed.

ITEM VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Dr. Kristi Hendrix, Executive Director of Midtown Partners, addressed the Board and stated that on behalf of Midtown Partners and the community members who have been very diligent in this process, she appreciates the opportunity over the next year to work closely on getting the school open. They are committed to what was stated in their application and will certainly fulfill all that was stated they would do.

Shamia Kelly, a resident of Midtown, thanked the Board for giving the residents of the area the opportunity to create an option for public school in their community.

Mike Sayer with Southern Echo first stated that he would like to applaud Board again for diligence in working the standards that the Board has adopted and statute mandated to ensure high quality standards are maintained in the development of charter schools. Everyone benefits from that diligence. Secondly, he asked if the Board retreat, referenced earlier in the meeting, would be noticed and open to the public.

Chairman Cardin stated that the public is welcome and that a notice will be posted on the Board's website and MS.gov.

Mr. Sayer asked if there is a set schedule of meetings for the upcoming year.

Chairman Cardin stated that that would be developed during the retreat and would be posted.

ITEM VIII. NEXT MEETING

The January meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 27 at 9:00 a.m. at Mississippi Department of Education with a Board retreat being held the previous day, Monday, January 26 beginning from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Mississippi Department of Education. Notice will be posted on the website and MS.gov.

ITEM IX. ADJOURN

Chairman Cardin requested a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: Mr. Franklin

SECOND: Dr. Wright

There being no discussion and following a vote in favor by all members present and participating, the motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

ADOPTED, this the 27th day of January, 2014.



TOMMIE S. CARDIN, Chairman